



Vertical Datums

Geospatial data in the coastal zone is key to answering critical questions on erosion, wetlands, habitat, land management, and smart growth. But coastal geospatial data come from diverse sources and frequently have different vertical references. Data are referenced to land-based benchmarks, tide gauges, or Global Positioning System (GPS) satellites.

NOAA's National Ocean Service, in partnership with the U.S. Geological Survey, has recently released VDatum, a software package that allows users to transform their data into a common system. By enabling the fusion of diverse data in desired reference levels, the transformations have led to new products and approaches, such as:

- Seamless bathymetry and topography
- Automated extraction of shoreline
- More efficient collection of hydrographic data
- Exploitation of new remote sensing technologies

Current models, including the regions of Tampa and Delaware Bays, North/Central California, Southeast Louisiana, and the New York/New Jersey Bight, are available at:
<http://www.chartmaker.ncd.noaa.gov/bathytopo/vdatum.htm>.

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The U.S. Department of Commerce
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration
National Ocean Service
National Geodetic Survey

The National Geodetic Survey (NGS) defines and manages the National Spatial Reference System, which determines position, height, distance, gravity, and shoreline throughout the United States. Since 1807, NGS and its predecessor agencies have led the world in precise positioning and developed emerging technologies for the public. NGS provides its expertise and a wealth of free information, including direct access to its data base on the World Wide Web at: www.ngs.noaa.gov.

